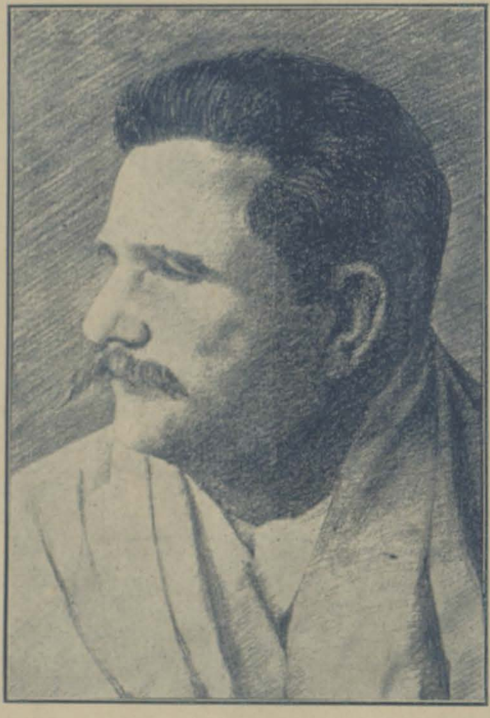
LETTERS OF IQBAL TO JINNAH

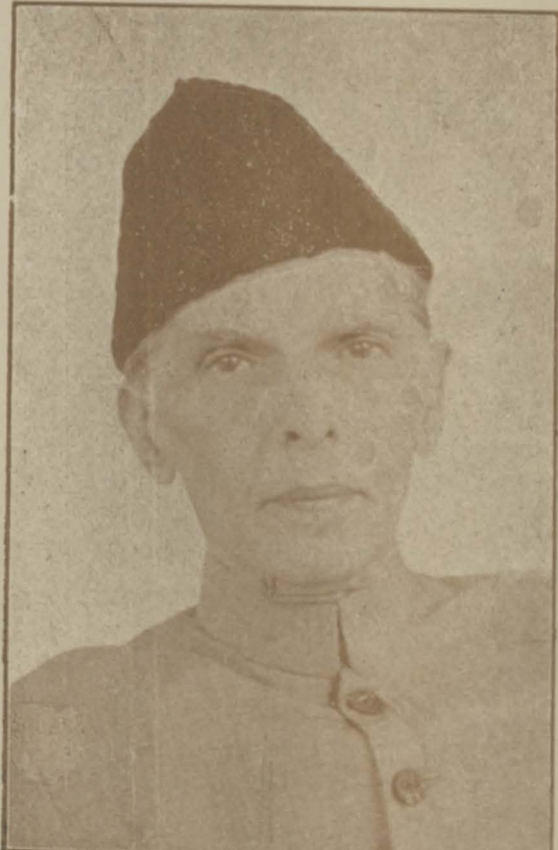
A collection of Iqbal's Letters to the Qaid-i-Azam conveying his views on the Political Future of Muslim India

WITH A FOREWORD
BY
M. A. JINNAH

SHAIKH MUHAMMAD ASHRAF
KASHMIRI BAZAR, LAHORE



IQBAL



QAID-I-AZAM MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAH

FOREWORD

The letters which form the subject of this booklet were written to me by the sage, philosopher and national poet of Islam, the late Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, during the period May 1936 to November 1937, a few months before his death. This period synchronises with a very eventful period in the history of Muslim India —between the establishment of the All-India Muslim League Central Parliamentary Board in June 1936 and the great historic sessions at Lucknow in October 1937.

If the Central Parliamentary Board with its Provincial Branches marked the first great attempt on the part of the Muslim League to rally round the Muslim opinion to contest the approaching elections, under the Government of India Act of 1935, for Provincial Legislature on the League ticket, the Lucknow Session indicated the first stage in the reorganisation of the Muslim League on a popular basis and as the only authoritative and representative organisation of Muslim India. Both

these high objects were attained in great part owing to the invaluable support that I obtained through the sincere efforts and patriotic and selfless activities of many friends like Sir Muhammad Iqbal, amongst others. The League gained from strength to strength in this short period. In each of the Provinces where League Parliamentary Board was established and the League parties were constituted we carried away about 60 to 70 per cent of the seats that were contested by the League candidates. Hundreds of District and Primary Leagues were established in almost every Province from the farthest corner of Madras to the North-West Frontier Province.

The League gave a staggering blow to the so-called Muslim Mass Contact Movement which was started by the Congress to disrupt Muslim ranks and to overawe League into submission. The League emerged triumphant in most of the by-elections and shattered the intrigues and machinations of those who hoped to create the impression that the Muslim League Organisation had no support of the

Muslim people.

Within eighteen months before the Lucknow Sessions, the League had succeeded in organising Muslims as one party with an advanced and progressive programme and had brought under its influence even those Provinces which for lack of time or preparation had not been sufficiently benefited by the activities of League Parliamentary Boards. The Lucknow Sessions furnished an unmistakable evidence of the popularity that League commanded among Muslims of all groups and ranks.

It was a great achievement for Muslim League that its lead came to be acknowledged by both the majority and minority Provinces. Sir Muhammad Iqbal played a very conspicuous part, though at the time not revealed to public, in bringing about this consummation. He had his own doubts about Sikandar-Jinnah Pact being carried out and he was anxious to see it translated into some tangible results without delay so as to dispel popular misapprehension about it, but unfortunately he

has not lived to see that the Punjab has all round made a remarkable progress and now it is beyond doubt that the Muslims stand solidly behind the Muslim League Organisation.

With this brief historical background in mind, the letters can be read with great interest. It is, however, much to be regretted that my own replies to Iqbal are not available. During the period under reference I worked alone unassisted by the benefit of a personal staff and so did not retain duplicate copies of the numerous letters that I had to dispose of. I made enquiries from the Trustees of Iqbal's estate at Lahore and was informed that my letters are not traceable. Hence I had no alternative but to publish the letters without my replies as I think these letters are of very great historical importance, particularly those which explain his views in clear and unambiguous terms on the political future of Muslim India. His views were substantially in consonance with my own and had finally led me to the same conclusions as a result of

careful examination and study of the constitutional problems facing India, and found expression in due course in the united will of Muslim India as adumberated in the Lahore resolution of the All-India Muslim League, popularly known as the "Pakistan Resolution," passed on 23rd March, 1940.

M. A. JINNAH

Lahore
23rd May, 1936

Dear Mr. Jinnah,

Thank you so much for your letter which I received a moment ago. I am glad to see that your work is progressing. I do hope that the Punjab parties—specially the Ahrar and the Ittihad Millat—will eventually, after some bickering, join you. A very enthusiastic and active member of the Ittihad told me so a few days ago. About M. Zafar Ali Khan the Ittihad people do not themselves feel sure. However there is plenty of time yet, and we shall soon see how the electorate generally feels about the Ittihad sending their men to the Assembly.

Hoping you are well and looking forward to meeting you,

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal

Lahore
9th June, 1936

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

I am sending you my draft. Also a cutting

from the *Eastern Times* of yesterday. This is a letter from an intelligent pleader of Gurdaspur.

I hope the statement issued by the Board will fully argue the whole scheme and will meet all the objections so far advanced against it. It must frankly state the present position of the Indian Muslims as regards both the Government and the Hindus. It must warn the Muslims of India that unless the present scheme is adopted the Muslims will lose all that they have gained during the last 15 years and will seriously harm, and in fact, shatter their own solidarity with their own hands.

Yours etc.

(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal

P.S. Will feel much obliged if you send the statement to me before it is sent to the press.

Another point which should be brought out in the statement is as follows :

1. Indirect election to the Central Assembly has made it absolutely essential that Muslim representatives returned to the Provincial Assemblies should be bound by an

All-India Muslim policy and programme so that they should return to the Central Assembly only those Muslims who would be pledged to support the specific Muslim questions connected with the Central subjects and arising out of their position as the second great nation of India. Those who are now for Provincial policies and programmes were themselves instrumental in getting indirect elections for the Central Assembly introduced into the constitution obviously because this suited a foreign Government. Now when the community wants to make the best use of this misfortune (i.e. indirect elections) by proposing an all-India scheme of elections (e.g. League scheme) to be adhered to by the Provincial candidates, the same men, again at the instance of a foreign Government, have come out to defeat the community in their effort to retain its solidarity as a nation.

2. Question of Wakf Law arising out of Shahidganj, culture, language, mosques and personal law.

Private and Confidential

Lahore
25th June, 1936

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

Sir Sikandar Hayat left Lahore a day or two ago. I think he will meet you at Bombay and have a talk with you about certain matters of importance. Daultana saw me yesterday evening. He tells me that the Muslim members of the Unionist Party are prepared to make the following declaration:

"That in all matters specific to the Muslim community as an all-India minority they will be bound by the decision of the League and will never make any pact with any non-Muslim group in the Provincial Assembly."

Provided the League (Provincial) makes the following declaration:

"That those returned to the Provincial Assembly on the League ticket will co-operate with that party or group which has the largest number of Muslims."

Please let me know at your earliest convenience what you think of this proposal. Also

let me know the result of your talk with Sir Sikandar Hayat. If you succeed in convincing him he may come to our side.

Hoping you are well,

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal

Mayo Road, Lahore
23rd August, 1936

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

I hope my letter reached you all right. There is some talk of an understanding between the Punjab Parliamentary Board and the Unionist Party. I should like you to let me know what you think of such a compromise and to suggest conditions for the same. I read in the papers that you have brought about a compromise between the Bengal Proja Party and the Parliamentary Board. I should like to know the terms and the conditions. Since the Proja Party is non-communal like the Unionist, your compromise in Bengal may be helpful to you.

Hoping you are well,

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal

Strictly Confidential *Lahore*
20th March, 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

I suppose you have read Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's address to the All-India National Convention and that you fully realise the policy underlying it in so far as Indian Muslims are concerned. I believe you are also aware that the new constitution has at least brought a unique opportunity to Indian Muslims for self-organisation in view of the future political developments both in India and Muslim Asia. While we are ready to co-operate with other Progressive Parties in the country, we must not ignore the fact that the whole future of Islam as a moral and political force in Asia rests very largely on a complete organisation of Indian Muslims. I therefore suggest that an effective reply should be given to the All-India National Convention. You should immediately

hold an All-India Muslim Convention in Delhi to which you should invite members of the new Provincial Assemblies as well as other prominent Muslim leaders. To this convention you must re-state as clearly and as strongly as possible the political objective of the Indian Muslims as a distinct political unit in the country. It is absolutely necessary to tell the world both inside and outside India that the economic problem is not the only problem in the country. From the Muslim point of view the cultural problem is of much greater consequence to most Indian Muslims. At any rate it is not less important than the economic problem. If you could hold this Convention, it would test the credentials of those Muslim Legislators who have formed parties contrary to the aims and aspirations of Indian Muslims. It would further make it clear to the Hindus that no political device, however subtle, can make the Indian Muslim lose sight of his cultural entity. I am coming to Delhi in a few days' time and hope to have a talk with you on this important matter. I shall be staying in

the Afghan Consulate. If you could spare a few moments, we should meet there Please drop a line in reply to this letter as early as possible.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal
Bar-at-Law

P.S. Please excuse me. I have got this letter written by a friend as my eye-sight is getting bad.

Lahore
22nd April, 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

I do not know whether my letter which I posted to you about two weeks ago ever reached you. I posted it to your address at New Delhi, and when I went to Delhi later, I discovered that you had already left Delhi. In that letter I proposed that we should hold immediately an All-India Muslim Convention, say at Delhi, and once more to re-state the policy of Indian Muslims both to the Government and to the Hindus.

As the situation is becoming grave and the

Muslim feeling in the Punjab is rapidly becoming pro-Congress for reasons which it is unnecessary to detail, I would request you to consider and decide the matter as early as possible. The session of the All-India Muslim League is postponed till August, and the situation demands an early re-statement of the Muslim policy. If the Convention is preceded by a tour of prominent Muslim leaders, the meeting of the Convention is sure to be a great success. Please drop a line in reply to this letter as early as possible.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal
Bar-at-Law

Confidential *Lahore*
28th May, 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

Thank you so much for your letter which reached me in due course. I am glad to hear that you will bear in mind what I wrote to you about the changes in the constitution and programme of the League. I have no doubt

that you fully realise the gravity of the situation as far as Muslim India is concerned. The League will have to finally decide whether it will remain a body representing the upper classes of Indian Muslims or Muslim masses who have so far, with good reason, taken no interest in it. Personally I believe that a political organisation which gives no promise of improving the lot of the average Muslim cannot attract our masses.

Under the new constitution the higher posts go to the sons of upper classes; the smaller ones go to the friends or relatives of the ministers. In other matters too our political institutions have never thought of improving the lot of Muslims generally. The problem of bread is becoming more and more acute. The Muslim has begun to feel that he has been going down and down during the last 200 years. Ordinarily he believes that his poverty is due to Hindu money-lending or capitalism. The perception that it is equally due to foreign rule has not yet fully come to him. But it is bound to come. The

atheistic socialism of Jawaharlal is not likely to receive much response from the Muslims. The question therefore is : how is it possible to solve the problem of Muslim poverty? And the whole future of the League depends on the League's activity to solve this question. If the League can give no such promises I am sure the Muslim masses will remain indifferent to it as before. Happily there is a solution in the enforcement of the Law of Islam and its further development in the light of modern ideas. After a long and careful study of Islamic Law I have come to the conclusion that if this system of Law is properly understood and applied, at last the right to subsistence is secured to everybody. But the enforcement and development of the Shariat of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim state or states. This has been my honest conviction for many years and I still believe this to be the only way to solve the problem of bread for Muslims as well as to secure a peaceful India. If such a thing is impossible in India the only other alternative

is a civil war which as a matter of fact has been going on for some time in the shape of Hindu-Muslim riots. I fear that in certain parts of the country, e.g., N.-W. India, Palestine may be repeated. Also the insertion of Jawaharal's socialism into the body-politic of Hinduism is likely to cause much bloodshed among the Hindus themselves. The issue between social democracy and Brahmanism is not dissimilar to the one between Brahmanism and Budhism. Whether the fate of socialism will be the same as the fate of Budhism in India I cannot say. But it is clear to my mind that if Hinduism accepts social democracy it must necessarily cease to be Hinduism. For Islam the acceptance of social democracy in some suitable form and consistent with the legal principles of Islam is not a revolution but a return to the original purity of Islam. The modern problems therefore are far more easy to solve for the Muslims than for the Hindus. But as I have said above in order to make it possible for Muslim India to solve these problems it is necessary to redistribute the country and to

provide one or more Muslim states with absolute majorities. Don't you think that the time for such a demand has already arrived? Perhaps this is the best reply you can give to the atheistic socialism of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Anyhow I have given you my own thoughts in the hope that you will give them serious consideration either in your address or in the discussions of the coming session of the League. Muslim India hopes that at this serious juncture your genius will discover some way out of our present difficulties.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal

P.S. On the subject-matter of this letter I intended to write to you a long and open letter in the press. But on further consideration I felt that the present moment was not suitable for such a step.

Private and Confidential *Lahore*
June 21st, 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

Thank you so much for your letter which

I received yesterday. I know you are a busy man ; but I do hope you won't mind my writing to you so often, as you are the only Muslim in India today to whom the community has a right to look up for safe guidance through the storm which is coming to North-West India, and perhaps to the whole of India. I tell you that we are actually living in a state of civil war which, but for the police and military would become universal in no time. During the last few months there has been a series of Hindu-Muslim riots in India. In North-West India alone there have been at least three riots during the last three months and at least four cases of vilification of the Prophet by Hindus and Sikhs. In each of these four cases, the vilifier has been murdered. There have also been cases of burning of the Koran in Sind. I have carefully studied the whole situation and believe that the real cause of these events is neither religious nor economic. It is purely political, *i.e.*, the desire of the Sikhs and Hindus to intimidate Muslims even in the Muslim

majority provinces. And the new constitution is such that even in the Muslim majority provinces, the Muslims are made entirely dependent on non-Muslims. The result is that the Muslim Ministry can take no proper action and are even driven to do injustice to Muslims partly to please those on whom they depend, and partly to show that they are absolutely impartial. Thus it is clear that we have our specific reasons to reject this constitution. It seems to me that the new constitution is devised only to placate the Hindus. In the Hindu majority provinces, the Hindus have of course absolute majorities, and can ignore Muslims, altogether. In Muslim majority provinces, the Muslims are made entirely dependent on Hindus. I have no doubt in my mind that this constitution is calculated to do infinite harm to the Indian Muslims. Apart from this it is no solution of the economic problem which is so acute among Muslims.

The only thing that the communal award grants to Muslims is the recognition of their

political existence in India. But such a recognition granted to a people whom this constitution does not and cannot help in solving their problem of poverty can be of no value to them. The Congress President has denied the political existence of Muslims in no unmistakable terms. The other Hindu political body, i.e., the Mahasabha, whom I regard as the real representative of the masses of the Hindus, has declared more than once that a united Hindu-Muslim nation is impossible in India. In these circumstances it is obvious that the only way to a peaceful India is a redistribution of the country on the lines of racial, religious and linguistic affinities. Many British statesmen also realise this, and the Hindu-Muslim riots which are rapidly coming in the wake of this constitution are sure further to open their eyes to the real situation in the country. I remember Lord Lothian told me before I left England that my scheme was the only possible solution of the troubles of India, but that it would take 25 years to come. Some Muslims in the Punjab are

already suggesting the holding of a North-West Indian Muslim Conference, and the idea is rapidly spreading. I agree with you, however, that our community is not yet sufficiently organised and disciplined and perhaps the time for holding such a conference is not yet ripe. But I feel that it would be highly advisable for you to indicate in your address at least the line of action that the Muslims of North-West India would be finally driven to take.

To my mind the new constitution with its idea of a single Indian federation is completely hopeless. A separate federation of Muslim provinces, reformed on the lines I have suggested above, is the only course by which we can secure a peaceful India and save Muslims from the domination of non-Muslims. Why should not the Muslims of North-West India and Bengal be considered as nations entitled to self-determination just as other nations in India and outside India are?

Personally I think that the Muslims of North-West India and Bengal ought at present

to ignore Muslim minority provinces. This is the best course to adopt in the interests of both Muslim majority and minority provinces. It will therefore be better to hold the coming session of the League in the Punjab, and not in a Muslim minority province. The month of August is bad in Lahore. I think you should seriously consider the advisability of holding the coming session at Lahore in the middle of October when the weather is quite good in Lahore. The interest in the All-India Muslim League is rapidly growing in the Punjab, and the holding of the coming session in Lahore is likely to give a fresh political awakening to the Punjab Muslims.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal
Bar-at-Law

Lahore
11th August, 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

Events have made it abundantly clear that the League ought to concentrate all its

activities on the North-West Indian Musalmans. The League office of Delhi informed Mr. Ghulam Rasool that the dates of the sessions of the Muslim League have not been fixed as yet.

This being so I fear it will not be possible to hold the sessions in August and September. I, therefore, repeat my request that the League sessions may be held in Lahore in the middle or end of October. The enthusiasm for the League is rapidly increasing in the Punjab, and I have no doubt that the holding of the session in Lahore will be a turning point in the history of the League and an important step towards mass contact. Please drop a line in reply.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal
Bar-at-Law

Private and Confidential *Lahore*
7th October, 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

A strong contingent from the Punjab is

expected to attend the Lucknow Session of the League. The Unionist Muslims are also making preparations to attend under the leadership of Sir Sikandar Hayat. We are living in difficult times and the Indian Muslims expect that your address will give them the clearest possible lead in all matters relating to the future of the community. I suggest that the League may state or re-state its policy relating to the communal award in the shape of a suitable resolution. In the Punjab and I hear also in Sind attempts are being made by misguided Muslims themselves to alter it in the interests of the Hindus. Such men fondly believe that by pleasing the Hindus they will be able to retain their power. I personally believe that since the British Government wants to honour the Hindus who would welcome the upsetter of the communal award they (the British Gevernment) are trying to get it upset through their Muslim agents.

I shall prepare a list of 28 persons for the vacancies in the League Council. Mr. Ghulam Rasool will show you this list. I do

hope that this choice will be carefully made. Our men will leave Lahore on the 13th.

The Palestine question is very much agitating the minds of the Muslims. We have a very fine opportunity for mass contact for the purposes of the League. I have no doubt that the League will pass a strong resolution on this question and also by holding a private conference of the leaders decide on some sort of a positive action in which masses may share in large numbers. This will at once popularise the League and may help the Palestine Arabs. Personally I would not mind going to jail on an issue which affects both Islam and India. The formation of a Western base on the very gates of the East is a menace to both.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal
Bar-at-Law

P. S. The League should resolve that no province should come to any understanding with other communities regarding the communal award. This is an All-India question

and must be settled by the League alone. Perhaps you may go further and say that the present atmosphere is not at all suitable for any communal understanding.

Private and Confidential *Lahore*

30th October, 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

I suppose you have already read the resolution passed by the A.-I.C.C. Your move in time has saved the situation, and we are all waiting for your observations on the Congress resolution. The *Tribune* of Lahore has already criticised it and I believe Hindu opinion will generally be opposed to it. However, it should not act as an opiate as far as Muslims are concerned. We must carry the work of organisation more vigorously than ever and should not rest till Muslim Governments are established in the five provinces and reforms are granted to Baluchistan.

The rumour is that part of the Unionist Party does not mean to sign the League creed. So far Sir Sikandar and his party have not

signed it and I heard this morning that they would wait till the next sessions of the League. The idea, as one of themselves told me, is to slacken the activities of the Provincial League. However, I shall place you in possession of all the facts in a few days' time and then ask your opinion as to how we should proceed. I do hope that before the Lahore Session you would be able to tour in the Punjab for at least two weeks.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal
Bar-at-Law

Urgent *Lahore*
1st November, 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan with some of the members of his party saw me yesterday and we had a long talk about the differences between the League and the Unionist Party. Statements have been issued to the press by both sides. Each side putting its own interpretation on the terms of Jinnah-Sikandar

agreement. This has caused much misunderstanding. As I wrote to you before, I will put you in possession of all those statements in a few days' time. For the present I request you to kindly send me as early as possible a copy of the agreement which was signed by Sir Sikandar and which I am told is in your possession. I further want to ask you whether you agreed to the Provincial Parliamentary Board being controlled by the Unionist Party. Sir Sikandar tells me that you agreed to this and therefore he claims that the Unionist Party must have their majority in the Board. This as far as I know does not appear in the Jinnah-Sinkandar agreement.

Please reply to this letter as early as possible. Our men are touring in the country and forming Leagues in various places. Last night we had a very successful meeting in Lahore. Others will follow.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal
Bar-at-Law

Strictly Private and Confidential *Lahore*
10th Nov., 1937

My dear Mr. Jinnah,

After having several talks with Sir Sikandar and his friends I am now definitely of the opinion that Sir Sikandar wants nothing less than the complete control of the League and the Provincial Parliamentary Board. In your pact with him it is mentioned that the Parliamentary Board will be reconstituted and that the Unionists will have majority in the Board. Sir Sikandar tells me that you agreed to their majority in the Board. I wrote to you some time ago to enquire whether you did agree to the Unionist Majority in the Board. So far I have not heard from you. I personally see no harm in giving him the majority that he wants but he goes beyond the pact when he wants a complete change in the office-holders of the League, especially the Secretary who has done so much for the League. He also wishes that the finances of the League should be controlled by his men. All this to my mind amounts to capturing of the League and then killing it.

Knowing the opinion of the province as I do I cannot take the responsibility of handing over the League to Sir Sikandar and his friends. The pact has already damaged the prestige of the League in this province ; and the tactics of the Unionists may damage it still further. They have not so far signed the creed of the League and I understand do not mean to. The session of the League in Lahore they want in April instead of February. My impression is that they want to gain time for their own Zamindara League to function in the province. Perhaps you know that on his return from Lucknow Sir Sikandar constituted a Zamindara League whose branches are now being made in the province. In these circumstances please let me know what we should do. Kindly wire your view if possible. If this is not possible write a detailed letter as early as possible.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) Mohammad Iqbal
Bar-at-Law

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